



***Division of Public Defender Services
State of Connecticut***

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**SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
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**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE RAPILLO
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DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

RAISED BILL 832, AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY ASSESSMENT CASES.

The Office of Chief Public Defender generally supports passage of Raised Bill 832, An Act Concerning Family Assessment Cases. The Department of Children and Families has changed its practice model to focus more on prevention and early intervention. In cases where children are not deemed to be at risk, DCF will divert the family and provide services through a "differential response". This proposal seeks to change "differential response" to "family assessment response". This is a good idea and accurately reflects DCF's new focus on working with families in the least restrictive manner possible to maintain child safety.

This proposal also provides that records of a person's involvement in a "family assessment response" case after five years would be expunged. This office believes that expungement should occur sooner and suggests that it happens after two years if no new reports of child abuse or neglect are received on the family. Five years is the waiting period required for a person to petition for removal from the state child abuse registry. Family assessment response cases should be expunged sooner than cases where a finding of abuse or neglect was entered by the court.